

Executive Registry

75-10219

30 December 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/DCI/IC

SUBJECT: Secrecy and Compartmentation --  
An Action Proposal

REFERENCE: DCI/IC 75-057, Same Subject,  
Dated 16 December 1975

1. Thank you for your provocative idea of 16 December. I certainly approve 100% your effort to break through the bureaucratic problems which have encrusted this matter. I would suggest that you add to your group someone who is politically sensitive to Executive, Congressional and other requirements for access to intelligence, such as George Cary or [ ] to be sure that the interests of the clients are represented.

STATINT

2. I would also like to propose an outline of an approach to this problem for your consideration and comment during your session. In essence it would separate protection of sources from protection of product. The concept is that we would indoctrinate all intelligence officers as to the distinction and indicate that the sole interest of intelligence is to protect the source. Any protection of the product should rest upon other grounds, e.g., the diplomatic or political difficulties which would be engendered by its revelation.

3. The protection of sources should be accomplished by generalized source descriptions, by writing material without quotations from individual messages and from highly compartmented security systems. These systems would permit compartmented access to individuals who need to know actual source identities, actual messages, technical details and similar matters which could reveal a specific source or capability vulnerable to counteraction. Primarily those with access would be at the working intelligence level, although some few, hopefully, senior officials would

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have to be given broad access over such types of material because of their own importance in decision-making, e.g., the President, Secretary of State, or because of a necessity that technical customers be informed of raw technical data which inevitably could pinpoint the source.

4. The second major category would be the product. This would still be considered as classified on many occasions, but the classification would be justified because of the diplomatic impact of revealing the material, because the material is a working paper or advisory to decision-makers or because it reveals the assessments on our side of certain matters on which the degree of our knowledge should not be known by our adversaries. However, the product should be produced in a form which does not necessarily reveal the specific source involved (although it could reveal that we have some source) and consequently could be given broader distribution to customers. Much of this material leaks to public attention today through background briefings (e.g., the Soviet strategic weapons estimates). There would be considerable gain in this process, however, in the fact that the intelligence officer consciously would write his product for customers from whom the specific source should be concealed. This would impel the intelligence officer to consider more seriously the protection of his sources in his writing (comparable to the journalist) rather than counting on the classification system to protect them, e.g., with respect to direct GATIA quotes or other highly revealing specifics.

5. This procedure would also be consistent with the concept behind our new sources and methods legislation, in that only those who consciously assume the obligation of protecting the sources through secrecy agreement would be given access to the source category of information, while the product category could be spread more broadly through the bureaucracy to customers who need it but do not need to know the detailed sources involved. It is just plain impractical to believe that we can get the necessary secrecy agreements from all the customers who need our product, but it should be possible to get them from those having any need to know the sources.

6. I realize this subject is a lot more complicated than indicated, but I offer this as a concept for further study and definition. It certainly couldn't be worse than what we have today.

WEC

W. E. Colby  
Director

WEC:kgt:30 Dec. 75

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Executive Registry

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SUSPENSE

Date

Remarks:

In your "retreat" on security & compartmentation, could you also reopen the question of making the simpler forms of COMINT plain "Secret" <sup>NOT</sup> without any codeword, analogous to our TK success? -

DCI/DDCI

12/30/75

STATINTL

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DCI/IC 75-057

16 DEC 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Secrecy and Compartmentation --  
An Action Proposal

1. The attached action study proposal was developed by an ad hoc group, consisting of the Chairmen of COMIREX, SIGINT, Security, and Human Resources Committees, aided by Hank Knoche and [ ] and benefitting from some sage input from Ed Proctor.

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2. In brief, the proposal is to have a small group of senior intelligence officers (such as Proctor, CIA; [ ] NSA; [ ] or [ ], DIA; [ ] IC Staff; and possibly Saunders, State/INR) seclude themselves for several days to focus uninterruptedly on our present problem of secrecy and compartmentation. The group would be armed with the relevant recent studies on this subject and would follow the general guidelines articulated in the attached proposal to develop a detailed conceptual approach to the problem. Following your approval of the concept for planning purposes, we would move sequentially through the successive phases as iterated in our proposed approach.

25X1

25X1A

3. If you approve this suggestion, we are prepared to move out.

25X1A

[ ]

Samuel V. Wilson  
Lieutenant General, USA  
D/DCI/IC

Attachment  
As stated

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DRAFT

ACTION STUDY PROPOSAL

Secrecy and Compartmentation

1. Over the past several years there have been numerous recommendations and complaints concerning the present security classification system, and particularly its intelligence compartmentation aspects. Suggestions have been made to alter the compartmentation procedures to allow wider dissemination of information, while at the same time, separate concerns have been expressed about protecting vulnerable aspects of sensitive programs. Despite the diversity of opinions in the community, they are not mutually exclusive. There is an urgent need to get intelligence to the essential users, as well as to protect those secrets whose compromise would jeopardize intelligence effectiveness. The objective of security policy must be to strike a balance between these needs. This is not to say that the present compartmentation system has not served a useful purpose. However, it was designed when the volume of compartmented information was smaller and there were fewer consumers than today, and many have come to perceive the system as having become too complex and administratively burdensome.

2. Although there have been some useful studies on the subject, it is now imperative that these problems be examined by

SECRET

a group of senior intelligence community officials and that this group develop policy guidelines to serve as the basis for designing a security system to meet the needs of today and the future.

3. The following phased approach to the problem is proposed:

PHASE I -- A small ad hoc group of senior intelligence officials will meet at  or other suitable location, to articulate and document their views of the problems of compartmentation and develop policy recommendations to overcome these concerns. This group's goals should include but not be limited to: (See attachment for suggested objectives.)

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- a) Determining the criteria for sensitive material that requires continued extraordinary protection.
- b) Establishing guidelines for a method of providing this extraordinary protection.
- c) Establishing guidelines to provide for the broadest dissemination of intelligence, consistent with need-to-know with particular attention to a simplified classification system for finished intelligence.
- d) Formulating a general plan for implementation.

PHASE II -- Study of the general plan developed by the ad hoc group by specialists in the SIGINT, COMIREX, security and human resources areas to obtain the views of these specialists as to the feasibility of the proposed plan.

PHASE III -- Consideration of these recommendations by the USIB.

PHASE IV -- Recognizing that a simulated computer test would involve a minimum of six months, the advice of computer experts would be sought to assure that there are no insurmountable problems posed by the plan as developed.

PHASE V -- Coordination of the DCI-approved recommendations with the appropriate levels of the Executive Branch.

PHASE VI -- Referral of the approved policy to the Security Committee, SIGINT Committee, COMIREX and Human Resources Committee for implementation.



ATTACHMENT  
(DRAFT)

Suggested Basic Objectives of Security Policy Review Group

I. Establish the basic objectives of a security system.

-- For each stage in the (design-development-manufacture, collection, processing and production) develop the criteria for determining what information and activities are particularly sensitive and require special security protection.

-- In relation to the foregoing, identify those <sup>real</sup> needs of intelligence analysts and users for information as to collection source and acquisition methods.

-- Recommend the mechanisms and procedures to be used to make continuing <sup>& changing</sup> judgments about sensitive aspects of collection and analysis that require special control to protect sources and methods.

-- Identify the impact of the foregoing on existing liaison and exchange agreements and recommend necessary modification.

-- Prepare recommendations concerning the feasibility of establishing a "Foreign Intelligence Information" security classification separate from E. O. 11652.

II. Develop ground rules for the implementation and administration of the "new" classification/security system to include:

-- Determining any needed changes in procedures for granting clearances and maintaining records on personnel cleared for access.

-- Assuring that cleared personnel understand the meaning of applied classification systems.

III. Identify significant differences between the proposed concepts and procedures and those that presently exist.

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